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2/7/1 (Item 1 from file: 16)
DIALOG(R) File 16:Gale Group PROMT(R)
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09746499 Supplier Number: 85120808 (THIS IS THE FULLTEXT)
Snowshoe walks away with best design.

Miel, Rhoda
Plastics News, v14, n8, p4
April 22, 2002

TEXT:

Tubbs Snowshoe Co. stakes its reputation on the quality of its bindings, so when the time came to create a new system, it had high expectations.

We wanted a binding that was intuitive as far as getting in and out," said Fran Mahoney, project engineer for the Stowe, Vt.-based business. "It had to be lightweight, it had to be easy to use, it had to work well. We also wanted it to look - for lack of a better word - modern."

Tubbs selected a relative newcomer to the recreational equipment field, Helix Design Inc., to come up with a wholly new take on bindings.

The result, a thermoplastic polyester elastomer-based system called the Bear Hug, not only made it into production in five months, it also garnered the best design award at the Society of the Plastics Industry Inc.'s Structural Plastics Division new-product design competition. The competition was held during the group's annual conference in Dearborn.

While the binding is small compared with its competitors, it fits its intended use well, said the three-judge panel of independent designers. The design award was co-sponsored by the Industrial Designers Society of America and Plastics News.

"It was very sensitive from a human factor," said Michael Fritz, industrial designer with Thetford Corp. of Ann Arbor, Mich. "The aesthetics were very important to the product and to the material."

The "human factor" played into the judges' other picks in the top three. The Pack Horse, a structural foam replacement for a wooden sawhorse, produced for Plastics Technology Inc. of Anacortes, Wash., has a carrying handle and adjustable-height legs. The molded-in-color, injection molded components for Buell Motorcycle Co. of East Troy, Wis., meanwhile, have an eye-catching quality.

Fritz, along with fellow judges Tom Roney, an associate professor for the College of Creative Studies in Detroit, and Evan Carpenter Crawford, an industrial designer with Sundberg Ferar of Walled Lake, Mich., said they surprised even themselves with their appreciation for the binding.

Mahoney and product manager Dan Kiniry of Tubbs came to Helix in Manchester, N.H., seeking something more intuitive than the typical collection system used to connect a snowshoe user's foot to the shoe.

"They were really looking at getting rid of the cumbersome number of straps," said Helix design manager A.K. Stratton. "It's like an explosion in a spaghetti factory."

It's not just aesthetics, Mahoney said. While a traditional binding has its place, it also requires that users learn how to tie down and connect them properly, to ensure they do not loosen during a hike.

Helix wanted to match the binding requirements to systems familiar from other sports, such as the ratchets on a snowboard binding or in-line skates, that would allow users to step in and quickly snap down into place. Adding to the complications was a requirement that the binding fit a variety of boot sizes and styles.

The earliest mockups consisted of a series of ratcheting buckles to

fold a prototype piece of vinyl around a boot, Stratton said.

The result was intriguing, but far too complex and expensive, even for the higher-end recreational snowshoes retailing at up to \$250 per pair. To create the final version the designers looked to manufacturing expertise from the toolmakers at Creative Machine Co. of Auburn, Maine, and molder FinProject NA Inc. of Quebec.

``Creative Machine was exceptional at accepting the challenge,'' Stratton said. ``At one point in the project, we got a phone call from them that it simply was not a manufacturable product.''

Working together, the team eliminated most of the buckles, instead creating a binding that could be molded flat, then use the properties inherent in the elastomer to allow it to curve over the boot. Helix fought for retaining a small foam layer inside the binding, which provides a higher perception of quality, while also protecting expensive hiking boots from scrapes or scratches.

Consumers have responded strongly to the Bear Hug, said Mahoney, who has the binding on his personal snowshoes.

``Usually when we introduce a product, people are skeptical,'' he said. ``Sales for the first year already were higher than expected, and we're getting early orders for (next season) that are a better level than we expected.''

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06669547 Supplier Number: 55403688 (THIS IS THE FULLTEXT)
ONE FINE YEAR; ANTON MAGNANI'S QUIRKY DRY-SHOD DESIGNS HAVE GAINED THE
ITALIAN DESIGNER RESPECT, RECOGNITION AND A DEAL WITH COMME DES GARCONS.

Zargani, Luisa
Footwear News, p102 ✓
August 2, 1999

TEXT:

By updating the chukka boot, designer and architect Anton Magnani, 40, has brought international recognition to Dry-shod in just two years. A version of the style with a sole that spilled over the upper earned Magnani best new designer at the U.K. footwear awards last year: The shoe has since become Dry-shod's trademark.

Dry-shod is aimed at dynamic urban professionals between 25- and 35 years old who are often connected with the fashion or communication industries. "This is the world I belong to; it's my reference point," said Magnani, who is in charge of design, sourcing, product development, marketing and graphic design.

"Dry-shod is a slang expression from the Midwest, and it means I'm fine; I'm comfortable," explained Magnani. "It's an image connected to the foot being dry, thus has a positive implication."

The line is produced by Compar, a division of Bata Group, based outside Padova, Italy. Dry-shod, however, is an independent project, and the line is not distributed by Bata. The brand is available at footwear and apparel stores such as Fiorucci and Corso Como in Milan.

Originally, the line, built around a work-shoe look, was launched in 1995, but Compar asked Magnani to turn the product around just one year later, after disappointing results. "I was lucky to have carte blanche from the company, which showed faith in me," said Magnani. Initially, the line was aimed only at men, but for spring 2000, the company is launching a women's line.

"This is only a mini-collection, but we will enlarge the women's division," said the designer. "It stems from the same concept as the men's, but we employ more delicate materials and shapes." Magnani designed 35 styles for men and 15 for the first women's collection.

For both, Magnani uses nubuck and canvas. "I only use natural materials, usually calf, and I like simple lines, but atypical shapes as well," said the designer. "We were the first to have toes pointing upwards," he claimed. Magnani added he will introduce many raw-edged styles for next spring.

The color palette includes pastels, orange, acid green, yellow, blue and khaki. "I'm no slave to basic brown or black," said the designer.

Magnani's designs also emphasize handmade techniques. For next spring, shoes feature outside stitching. The designer re-elaborated the line's timeless, hand-wrapped natural crepe or rubber on the shoes' vamps and soles by adding a vegetable additive to create a sky-blue color. The soles are either cemented or sewn.

Soles have always played an important part in Dry-shod. Magnani developed his own design for the technological XL Extralight sole by Finproject and used it for many of the Dry-shod models. Finproject also produces soles for Hogan and Fratelli Rossetti.

Japan is Dry-shod's biggest market, but Magnani said the company is planning a new strategy to infiltrate the United States. (Currently, the States account for just 5 percent of sales.) "We previously approached the